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Archival Resources on the Web—Emily Symonds Stenberg, Assistant Editor, Washington University at St. Louis

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Riding the Rails: Trains and Railroads on the World Wide Web

By Emily Symonds Stenberg, Washington University at St. Louis

Just as train tracks cross the United States from north to south and east to west, repositories throughout the country curate archival resources on the railroads. These collections document the history of the railroads and the people who helped build them, providing perspectives on business and industry, style, transportation, technology, and more.

The United States Department of Transportation Library's Online Digital Special Collections provides access to the **ICC (Interstate Commerce Commission) Historical Railroad Investigation Reports**, ntl1.specialcollection.net/scripts/ws.dll?websearch&site=dot_railroads, from 1911 through 1994. Users click on the year then the railroad name to view a small table that includes the file number, railroad, date, location, and accident type. Users can click on a PDF to read the original report. Below the table is a transcription of the original document.

The University of South Carolina offers the **South Carolina Railroads Photograph Collection**, library.sc.edu/digital/collections/Railroads.htm. This online resource is a collection of collections held by the South Carolina Library with images of train stations, engines, and rail yards, as well as railways used in the mining and lumber industries. The collection of more than 800 images can be browsed or searched by keyword, with results narrowed by facet. Users can also browse within three broad categories: Locomotives, Depots, and Industrial Lines. Locations are identified within the images, and a Google Map has been created, allowing users to view photographs by town.

The **Railroad History Archive**, railroads.uconn.edu/digital.htm, at the University of Connecticut's Thomas J. Dodd Research Center is another collection of collections. Its digital holdings on the history of the railroad in Connecticut include Connecticut: New Haven Railroad Valuation Maps, a set of maps from 1915 showing the New Haven Railroad system's property information. An index of the maps can be found at magic.lib.uconn.edu/mash_up/nynhhrr_index.html. Other available collections are Connecticut History Online, with images of Connecticut railroad stations; the Steam and Electric Locomotives of the New Haven Railroad Digital Project, featuring 460 images of locomotive equipment from the early 1900s;

and the Connecticut Historic Preservation Collection, which includes archaeological and architectural surveys of railroad stations and other properties. The Railroad History Archive website also includes descriptions of other related collections not available on the Internet.

The University of Pittsburgh presents **Photographs from the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad Company Collection, 1886–1972**, digital.library.pitt.edu/images/pittsburgh/plerr.html, a comprehensive look at one company's records and activities. The complete collection contains over 16,000 images and 2,000 feet of 16mm motion picture film, as well as administrative records, business documents, and annual and monthly reports for the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad Company. The 2,055 images in the online photograph collection depict the branch lines controlled by New York Central and Penn Central, in addition to urban and rural scenes of Western Pennsylvania. Photographs such as these capture both the industry of railroads and the activities and styles of the time. The finding aid for the complete collection is also available online.

Farther west is Southern Methodist University's **Railroads: Photographs, Manuscripts, and Imprints, DeGolyer Library**, digitalcollections.smu.edu/all/cul/rwy. This contains one of the most comprehensive railroad collections in the country, originally collected by Evert L. DeGolyer. It contains over 15,000 photographs and negatives of railroads arranged by line. Other materials accessible through the digital collection are maps, timetables, personal papers, and 56 volumes of the *Baldwin Locomotive Works Engine Specifications*, 1869–1938, which detail the specifications of locomotives built for US and international railroad companies.

To travel from east to west, trains had to cross the heartland, and Midwest institutions have documented those journeys in their collections. As part of CARLI digital collections, **Railroads in the Midwest: Early Documents and Images (Knox College)**, collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm4/index_knx_rail.php?CISOROOT=/knx_rail, highlights the early history of railroads in the Midwest, with a focus on Illinois. A detailed collection description provides historical context for the materials. Noteworthy

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items include images of the CB&Q (Chicago, Burlington & Quincy) fast mail train, which started running in the 1870s from Chicago west to deliver mail. Many of the CB&Q photographs were taken by Knox College alumnus Allen A. Green, who also developed a trigger device to show trains in motion that allowed a train to take its own picture. The collection includes images and documents through 1933.

Behind the railroads were the people who built the tracks, operated the trains, and ran the companies. The Michigan State University Libraries recently published the **Biographical Directory of Michigan Railway Officials, 1830–1917**, www.lib.msu.edu/branches/dmc/collection/browse/?coll=130&par=0, as part of the Michigan State University Digital Collections. Written by Graydon M. Meints, this two-volume collection, divided A–J and K–Z, is in a searchable PDF format, allowing users to find the names of and key details about more than 7,000 people. The *Biographical Directory of Michigan Railway Officials*, covering the years 1830 to 1917, documents owners, directors, managers, and other key railroad officials. The information is drawn from a number of sources, including Michigan Commissioner of Railroads and Michigan Railroad Commission annual reports, the *Biographical Directory of the Railway Officials of America*, and Standard and Poor's reports.

Another comprehensive resource can be found at Cleveland State University Libraries' Cleveland Memory Project. The **Cleveland Union Terminal Project**, www.clevelandmemory.org/cut-coll/index.html, is a web exhibit featuring archival materials on the construction of the landmark site, including Terminal Tower, the passenger station, railroad infrastructure, office buildings, a post office, and a department store. The exhibit highlights more than 5,000 construction photographs from 1926 to 1929, film of the terminal from 1928, etchings, and images of a plaster model of the project. Each of the collections within the exhibit can be viewed separately. The larger collection of photographs is searchable, and results can be narrowed by date, subject, or other categories. On the main search page, users can also search within indexes of images of four key landmarks: the Cuyahoga Viaduct, Higbee's Department Store, the Medical Arts and Transportation Building, and Terminal Tower. The Cleveland Union Terminal Project exhibit links to related collections, including the Cleveland Union Terminal records description in the Fred Harvey Hotels Collection, 1896–1945, at the University of Arizona.

Cleveland Memory also includes a pathfinder of railroad history holdings at www.clevelandmemory.org/exhibits/railroads.html, featuring the Cleveland Union Terminal Project, the Nickel Plate Railroad Collection, and the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad Collection. The pathfinder lists related archival collections and online photograph collections.

At the University of Nebraska–Lincoln is the **Digital History Project: Railroads and the Making of Modern America**, railroads.unl.edu, which documents and offers interpretations of the impact of the railroad on the United States in the nineteenth century. The project explores 10 topics, including Slavery and Southern Railroads; Railroad Work and Workers; Land Sales, Migration and Immigration; and Tourism and Mobility. Within each topic are historical documents and Views, which are interpretive historical presentations; these may be databases, maps, charts, animations, GIS images, or other formats. A Student Projects section links to projects developed by students using the materials of the Railroads Project, and a teaching section provides ideas, plans, and materials for classroom use.

While riding the rails may not be as common as in years past, researching their history, whether of freight or passenger trains, has become even easier with online access to these and other collections.

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